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Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on her visit to Israel: comments by the State of Israel

Note by the Secretariat

The Secretariat has the honour to transmit to the Human Rights Council the comments by the State on the report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against women, its causes and consequences in her visit to Israel.

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Report of the Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on her visit to Israel: comments by the State of Israel*

Response to recommendations

1. Israel invited the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women (SRVAW) to conduct a country visit to Israel with the understanding that her report would focus on the situation of women in Israel. However, as is clearly stated from the beginning of the report till its end, the SRVAW frames her visit to Israel "… in a general context of protracted and prolonged occupation punctuated by frequent incidents of violence and absence of any prospect of peace that creates a growing despair and hopelessness among the population. "(page 3, paragraph 6).

2. Although the SRVAW prepared a separate report on her visit to the Palestinian Authority, the report on Israel, rather than analyzing the situation of women in Israel, places a disproportional focus on the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians. The report is framed almost entirely in terms of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, completely overshadowing many other key factors that influence gender based violence (GBV), such as socioeconomic, religious, cultural etc.

3. Even when addressing the conflict and its potential effects on GBT, the report fails to show a clear causal relation between the situation of Palestinian women and the conflict, or to provide any information that shows a difference between their situation and that of women from a similar cultural and social background.

4. The recurring term of "gendered impacts" of the occupation/conflict remains extremely vague. It provides no evidence or explanation for many of the claims, and serves as a shaky base for some far-reaching conclusions about Israel's alleged responsibility for the violence Palestinian women suffer in the hands of other Palestinians.

5. The report fails to demonstrate how policies governing Israel's administration of the Territories have any particular relevance to the question of violence against woman (VAW) as such. Rather, it adopts an overly broad interpretation of realities on the ground, that sees any potential impact on human rights (be it the right to adequate housing, education, health) as affecting women in particular, and as worth mentioning in a report dealing with VAW. This again raises doubts as to the soundness of the process that led to this report.

6. Moreover, while putting a disproportional focus on the conflict, it ignores completely the effects that the conflict has over Israeli women and girls. In fact, the only reference to the negative impact of the conflict on Israeli women is that, in order to thwart terror attacks, Israeli security guards are allowed to keep their weapons at home.

7. There is no reference to many female victims of Palestinian incitement and terror, including women and girls who were wounded or murdered by Palestinian terrorists in acts of stabbing, shooting, rocket firing, stone throwing, car ramming, etc.

8. Some recent examples include the cruel and violent murder of a mother by a Palestinian minor on the doorsteps of her own home, in front of her own children; the murder of a 13 year-old Israeli girl by a Palestinian terrorist while she was asleep in her bed; the stabbing of a pregnant Israeli woman by a Palestinian; the murder of a young Israeli woman who was taking a stroll in her neighborhood

* Reproduced as received.

9. Unfortunately, this report continues with the same language familiar from previous reports which focus on condemnation of Israel. This is unfortunate as, in doing so, this report has missed an opportunity to encourage the relevant Israeli authorities to take meaningful action in order to improve the situation of women in Israel. By choosing to do so, the SRVAW has given preference to the anti-Israel agenda of the HRC rather than focusing on the best interests of women.

10. In summary, while the special mandate on VAW is thematic in nature, the report on Israel aligns itself with the biased anti-Israel political agenda of the Human Rights Council, and the myriad reports previously prepared by the OHCHR on numerous issues related to the conflict. Regrettably, tainting this report with the biased political agenda of the HRC against Israel will not help women who are victims of GBV, whether Israeli or Palestinian.

11. The fact that the SRVAW has politicized an independent and professional thematic report is not only disappointing but also very troubling. It raises concerns over the credibility and impartiality of the OHCHR and of the UNHRC special procedures.